



# LIFELINK

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## Getting Ahead of the Post-Holiday Blues

Now that the gifts have been opened, loved ones have left, leave is ending and leftovers are gone, you may find that the *happy* is starting to fade with the passing of the holidays. While you might be grateful for returning to routine, the “come-down” from the fast pace and merriment of the season may leave you feeling a little blue. Here are four Small ACTs to help you start the New Year off with a fresh outlook and shake off the humbugs for good.

**Take a Moment to Unplug and Recharge.** Though we think of the holidays as a break from work, that’s not always the case. Whether you were forward-deployed, working your usual hours or were hurriedly preparing for family gatherings and last minute shopping, you may have found yourself short on rest. As the New Year begins, make a commitment to incorporate more downtime into your routine and make sleep a priority, aiming for at least seven hours per day. To help you reach this goal, take advantage of any opportunity for brief naps during the day. And, while staying connected with loved ones is important, consider “unplugging” 15-30 minutes before bedtime to create an optimal sleep environment. Check out this post for more tips to help [recharge your resilience with a good night’s sleep](#).

**Get Moving!** Physical activity helps increase the production of endorphins (our brain’s feel-good neuro-transmitters), countering effects of stress while keeping you physically and emotionally fit. According to the [Navy Physical Readiness Program](#), Sailors should participate in moderate physical activity for at least two hours and 30 minutes per week. If you’re short on time or motivation, get going with this [do-anywhere-workout](#) to help you re-establish your exercise regimen. Short on space? There’s a [workout for that](#), too!

**Regain a Sense of Control.** Does a lack of green in the bank have you a little blue? Though you may have given it your strongest effort this season, realities of overspending can take anyone by surprise when the bills start to roll in. Knowing where you stand can help you regain a sense of [Controllability](#) and peace of mind.

Start by collecting your receipts and matching them against spending to separate holiday transactions from household expenses. This will also help to ensure that each expense on your credit card statement is valid (for identity theft information, click [here](#)). Now that you have a better idea of what you may owe beyond what you originally budgeted for, you can create a feasible plan to eliminate holiday debt or reduce spending to increase cash on hand. In addition to seeking advice at your local Fleet and Family Support Center, check out [www.powerpay.org](http://www.powerpay.org) to help you determine the best way ahead.

**Connect with Gratitude to Combat Loneliness.** Though there are holidays that are oriented toward conveying gratitude and love, you can connect with these feelings at any time of year to reap their [benefits](#). If you find yourself feeling lonely, write a note to a loved one, shipmate or friend describing how he or she makes a difference in your life. Expressing thanks can strengthen connections with others and benefit both parties. Volunteering for a cause that holds personal [Meaning](#) is another way to find satisfaction, connection and a sense of purpose.

Try incorporating these tips into daily life to help you perk up post-holidays, or choose one to practice throughout the New Year. For added motivation, personalize your “1 Small ACT” sign with your commitment to yourself for 2016, available [here](#).

*I will...*

Commit to strengthening  
my Total Sailor Fitness  
in 2016!



Every Sailor. Every Day



## Lifelink Spotlight

### Balance, Bonding and Expectations

Predictability, one of the **Principles of Resilience**, can help us prepare for and respond to challenges, minimizing stress. However, we will inevitably encounter unexpected situations or circumstances, requiring us to adapt and learn as we go. Such was the case for Chief Mass Communication Specialist Leah Stiles, who spent months looking forward to reuniting with her family following her first deployment.

When the moment that she pictured came, Stiles' husband and eldest child were excited to see her, but she was met with unfamiliarity by her infant daughter. Though photographs of the moment depict tears of joy, Stiles reflects that those tears were of a "broken hearted mother whose child [didn't] recognize her."

In an effort to help other military families feel better prepared to navigate separation during deployment—and instill a sense of Predictability—Stiles shared her experience in **All Hands Magazine**. In her article, she offers tips to maintain connections with family while deployed, including leaving a jar of M&Ms so that children can remove one each day during the deployment to help them physically see the time progressing. She also advocates for leaving hidden notes, stuffed animals and mementoes to brighten up any bad days. This, she says, will help the deployed parent feel a sense of purpose rather than feeling helpless when hearing about their little ones' woes.

"Not every moment will be picture perfect," says Stiles. "...But they can be more like what you picture."

Deployments can be tough on the entire family, but can present particular challenges for the Sailor who may feel disconnected from his or her family responsibilities. Stiles' tips may help lessen the impact of this transition while keeping relationships strong.

This month, we spotlight Chief Leah Stiles for her efforts to help her fellow Sailors stay connected and build resilience as a family—essential protective factors against the negative effects of stress. Sharing experience is 1 Small ACT that can make a difference to *Every Sailor, Every Day*.

*What will you do to help your shipmates navigate stress? 1 Small ACT can save a life. You can share your small act with the entire Navy community by personalizing your **1 Small ACT Sign** and sending a photo of yourself with your sign to [suicideprevention@navy.mil](mailto:suicideprevention@navy.mil). Your photo will be posted in the 1 Small ACT Photo Gallery on our **Facebook page**. Submissions will be accepted through August 31, 2016. For more details, click [here](#).*

## Resilience Corner

### Mindful Walking Using a Labyrinth

*Cmdr. Kim Donahue, Group Chaplain for USS Theodore Roosevelt and Carrier Strike Group TWELVE, reflects on mindfulness and reconnecting with spirituality through labyrinth walking. To find a labyrinth near you, visit [www.labyrinthsociety.org](http://www.labyrinthsociety.org) and enter your zip code.*

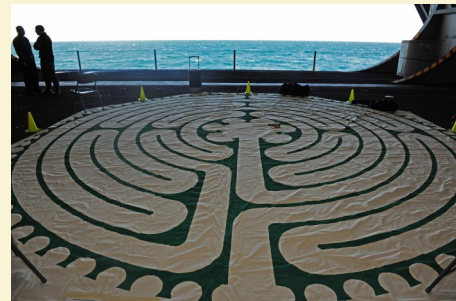
Have you ever started down a path and suddenly realized you had no idea where you might end up? Reflection and meditation are as old as the hills, and as seldom visited by most.

Recently, I have started to practice mindful walking. Having just served on board a nuclear aircraft carrier, walking is like a sport. You have to avoid knee-knockers, electrical outlets on the bulkhead, low overheads, other people who are transiting with a mission-paced walk, etc. With a mission in the back of my mind—and places to get to—much of my walking time is spent literally just transporting my body from one location to another. Quick "Hey, how 'ya doin's?" fly out of my mouth, answers noted, smiles and eyes lock, and I am off. I am a fast walker!

There was a time about ten years ago—after some extensive surgery—that I had a "smell the roses" pace to my walk. It was absolutely imperative that I had a destination in mind before I began to walk, but along the way I had time to engage the dust bunnies in my path. I still remember the drastic change and the lessons learned as I had to take time moving from place to place. On a carrier, however, that would be dangerous.

As an action-oriented person, walking slowly helps me to slow my mind. Initially, I am most aware of my feet touching the ground, my breathing and heart rate as they slow down, too. Then the quieter prayers, thoughts, whispers of truth begin. One of my favorite places to do such mindful walks is in the comfort of a labyrinth. Labyrinths are excellent tools for such quiet walks, with a single path leading to the center and back out again, no decisions to be made and no traffic to avoid.

Mindful walking is really quite simple. It makes every journey longer. One has the time to notice and pay attention to surroundings—even time to stop and pause. Insights and thoughts come pouring over you, offering a level of awareness that might otherwise be missed when one is walking with arrival being the only goal. The world seems new and different each time you set out, even if the path is the same. Wonder is reinstated as a soul state. The song "I wonder as I wander" speaks to this kind of journey of wonderment related to God's purposes in our lives. An anonymous author wrote "For each of us, there is a desert to travel—a star to discover. And a being within ourselves to bring to life." I invite you to become more mindful of life's sacredness, brought to life in you.



## News and Resources

Stress Continuum Model  
Infographic  
[OSC](#)

What you Need to know about  
Mindfulness Meditation  
[DCOE](#)

4 Simple Ways to Live a Life  
you Love  
[Guard Your Health](#)

Exercising in Cold Weather:  
Some Helpful Guidelines  
[Health.mil](#)

Nutrition's Role in Building  
Resilience  
[Real Warriors](#)

A New Year's Resolution for  
your Relationships  
[HPRC](#)

Video Profiles: I Can, I Will  
[Real Warriors](#)

I am Navy Medicine: Naval  
Hospital Bremerton 2015 Jr.  
Officer of the Quarter, Lt.  
Kathleen Saul, Psychologist  
[Navy Medicine Live](#)

10 Top Tips for Tip-Tops Sleep  
[NCCOSC](#)

Eating with Food in Mind  
[NMCPHC](#)

DON to Comply with New  
Hawaii Tobacco Law  
[Navy.mil](#)

Remember the Gift of Life this  
Winter: Give Blood  
[DoD Live](#)

## Current and Upcoming Events

**Healthy Weight Month**  
**(NMCPHC)**  
January

**SPC Training Webinars**  
January 13, 1000  
January 28, 0800  
February 11, 1400  
February 23, 1000  
[Register Here](#)

## Eat Together to Live Better

The dinner table has long been a cherished icon of American culture, signifying connection, communication and shared experience. While mealtime with loved ones and friends may be a staple of the holiday season, the frequency often decreases dramatically during the rest of the year. However, the advantages of enjoying a meal with others far outweigh the excuses. As you gear up for a healthier year, take a look at a few ways that sharing meals can benefit your physical and psychological health.



**You're likely to eat smarter.** According to Stanford University, Americans consume one out of every five meals in the car [1]. It's no secret that when eating alone on the go, you may make less nutritious choices and eat hurriedly without stopping to consider whether you're full. Sitting down to share a meal with others is an opportunity to slow down the pace, as you're likely to pause between bites to engage in conversation. These pauses are chances to listen to your body and be mindful of signals that you may not have room for more. As an added bonus, frequency of shared meals is associated with higher intake of fruits and vegetables [2]. Try practicing **mindful eating** to reap the full benefits of engaging with others while focusing on your meal.

**Mealtime can foster community.** Gathering around the table to enjoy meals with shipmates or family helps to promote connectedness and belongingness, **protective factors** against suicide and the negative effects of stress. Mealtime is an opportunity to bond and engage with others by sharing experiences, offering support and improving communication. To encourage interaction, optimize your mealtime environment by turning off the television and ensuring that mobile devices are out of sight.

**Likelihood of risk-taking behavior may decrease.** Sharing meals together, especially as a family, has been linked with decreased risk-taking and destructive behaviors. This includes lower likelihood for alcohol misuse, illegal drug use, as well as suicide related behavior [2]. One study indicates that youth who ate a meal with their family five or more days a week were half as likely to consider suicide. Additionally, those who experienced depressive symptoms within the previous year who regularly shared meals with others were also less likely to consider suicide during that timeframe [3].

Don't think you have enough time to sit down and eat with your shipmates and loved ones? Start by committing to achievable goals, like setting aside thirty minutes one day per week to build a routine. Get everyone involved in the decision-making process, and remember, *any* meal can be a shared meal (not just dinner on a weeknight!). Plan your meals in advance to minimize stress and spending while maximizing nutrition. To promote connection among shipmates, organize a regularly occurring potluck within your unit or association.

Make your mealtime an opportunity to step away from your hectic day and connect with others on a personal level. Actively engaging with others can enable early recognition of distress, providing the opportunity for support and care. Fostering cohesion is 1 Small ACT that can you can do to be there for *Every Sailor, Every Day*.

### Sources:

1. What's for Dinner? (n.d.). Retrieved December 18, 2015, from <http://news.stanford.edu/news/multi/features/food/eating.html>
2. Oregon Shared Meals Initiative. (n.d.). Retrieved December 18, 2015, from <https://public.health.oregon.gov/PreventionWellness/Nutrition/SharedMeals/Pages/index.aspx>
3. Utah Health Status Update: Risk and Protective Factors to Youth Suicide. (2015, February 1). Retrieved December 23, 2015, from [http://health.utah.gov/oph/publications/hsu/1502\\_Suicide.pdf](http://health.utah.gov/oph/publications/hsu/1502_Suicide.pdf)